

9 San Francisco MUNI

Third Street Light Rail Project

OVERVIEW: TRANSIT SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

The San Francisco Municipal Railway (MUNI) carries 682,000 daily riders throughout San Francisco on trolley coaches, diesel buses, light rail vehicles, streetcars and cable cars. MUNI operates 79 bus lines, five light rail lines (MUNI Metro), three cable car lines and an historic streetcar line. Of these routes, 54 buses and all of the light rail/streetcar lines connect to downtown. Service hours on most buses and light rail lines are 5 am to 1 am; 12 bus lines run 24 hours. MUNI also links passengers to regional transit systems, such as Caltrain (commuter rail to San Mateo and Santa Clara counties), BART (heavy rail to Alameda, Contra Costa and San Mateo counties), SamTrans (bus service to San Mateo County), Golden Gate Transit (bus service to Marin and Sonoma counties), and Bay Area ferries (service to Marin, Sonoma, and Alameda Counties).³⁸

The length of the north-south Third Street corridor is currently served by the 15 Third Street bus line, carrying 25,000 passengers per day. The 9 routes (9, 9X, 9AX, and 9BX) connect the same neighborhoods, but do not follow Third Street. Total daily boardings for those four bus lines are 32,400; the express lines run on weekdays only. In addition, a number of cross-town routes intersect Third Street.³⁹

The Third Street Light Rail line will run roughly seven miles, and although portions of the alignment have not been finalized, the surface portion of the line will travel primarily along Third Street. Construction is scheduled to proceed in two phases. Phase 1 consists of a 5.4-mile surface extension with 19 planned stations, running down the median of the existing six-lane arterial, and connecting on King Street with the existing E-Line MUNI Metro. The scheduled revenue service date is mid-2003. Phase 2 is a 1.7-mile subway extension with one surface station and four underground stations. The revenue service date has yet to be determined. Projected 2015 ridership is 71,000 passengers per day for the surface line, and 21,000 passengers per day for the subway.⁴⁰

³⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation-Federal Transit Administration and the City and County of San Francisco Planning Department, Third Street Light Rail Project: Draft Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report (April 3, 1998).

³⁹ FTA and San Francisco Planning Department, Third Street Light Rail Project: DEIS/DEIR (April 3, 1998).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

STATION AREA PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Third Street Light Rail Project case study focuses on the revitalization of a neighborhood commercial core through transit-supportive strategies. The Third Street Light Rail Project will connect the City's southeastern neighborhoods with the Financial District and Chinatown.

In the southern portion of the corridor, the light rail line will travel through the existing neighborhoods of Visitacion Valley and Bayview Hunters Point (site of the proposed Candlestick Point Mall and Stadium). To the north, the corridor includes underutilized land in Mission Bay that is targeted for a major portion of San Francisco's future growth, including a new research campus for the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), commercial office space, residential development, and open space. In addition, the new San Francisco Giants ballpark, now under construction at Third and King Streets, will be served by the light rail system.

In total, the light rail line will pass through four federally designated Empowerment Zones (Visitacion Valley, Bayview Hunters Point, South of Market and Chinatown). In addition, the corridor traverses through three existing redevelopment areas (India Basin, Rincon Point/South Beach, and Yerba Buena) and three proposed redevelopment areas (Bayview Hunters Point, Mission Bay and Transbay).

The Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood was once identified as the thriving home to the City's African-American, working-class community, many of whom earned a living at the nearby Hunters Point Naval Shipyard during the 40's, 50's and 60's. However, in recent years, Bayview Hunters Point has witnessed the closing of the shipyard and disinvestment, and has consistently had unemployment and crime rates that exceed the citywide average. The residential population fell from a high of about 50,000 in 1950 to about 27,500 in 1990.⁴¹ Furthermore, the neighborhood is physically disconnected from the rest of San Francisco by the industrial districts to the north and west, and two freeways. With that in mind, the city has placed a strong emphasis on reconnecting Bayview Hunters Point to the City's economy and transit system.

Planning for the Third Street Light Rail project brings together two parallel planning processes: transit and economic development planning. In transit planning, the corridor was identified in 1989 as one of four in the city to receive part of the projected \$300 million to be raised by a voter-approved bond measure for new fixed guideway investments. MUNI then completed a systems-level study in 1993 that recommended a light rail line in the middle of the Third Street median. Project development and environmental clearance work began in the fall of 1996. Completion of the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) is scheduled for fall 1998, and completion of preliminary engineering for December 1998.

⁴¹ San Francisco Municipal Railway, Third Street Light Rail Project: Economic Revitalization Strategies Report, Working Paper #6, prepared by the Pittman & Hames Associates (January 1998).

In community development planning, the San Francisco Planning Commission approved an Area Plan for the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood in 1995. The plan called for resolving conflicts between industrial and residential areas, revitalizing the declining commercial core, maintaining housing affordability, and increasing local employment. The community strongly supported preserving the density and character of existing single family residential areas, while maintaining existing residential densities along the commercial core. However, community members feared that proposed changes would not be made without further interventions, and pushed for San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) assistance. With the invitation by community leaders, the SFRA began the process of surveying Bayview Hunters Point, documenting blighting conditions, and developing a community-based Redevelopment Concept Plan. The Project Area Committee (PAC), a citizens' group that provides guidance and support to the SFRA as the redevelopment plan is developed and implemented, was elected in January 1997. The Revitalization Concept Plan is expected to be completed in mid-1998.

MUNI and the SFRA have been working closely together to ensure that the light rail project helps the larger goal of community and economic revitalization. They have jointly hosted a number of community forums and prepared background documents on Third Street. (see figure)

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Third Street traverses a number of distinct neighborhoods. The southernmost point, Visitation Valley, contains predominantly moderate-density single family residential, with some neighborhood-serving retail and light industrial jobs. Bayview Hunters Point, is also a largely moderate-density single family, with some multifamily and affordable housing projects. The Bayview Hunters Point commercial core, located on Third Street between Thomas and Kirkwood Streets, is economically stagnant with neighborhood-serving retail and service stores. The commercial core is characterized by scattered retail uses, poor façade maintenance and vacant storefronts (over 16 vacancies in the nine block commercial core as of September 1997) reflecting the economic difficulties that have beset Bayview Hunters Point since the closure of the Naval Shipyard in 1974.⁴²

North of Bayview Hunters Point, Mission Bay and the Central Waterfront are largely industrial areas that are expected to attract intense mixed-use development over the next decade. Development projects include a ballpark, university research campus, and between 10,000 and 15,000 units of housing. The South of Market area is transforming from an industrial and warehouse district into an area that houses the emerging multimedia industry, lofts, both large and small-scale retail, and intensive office development. Finally, the subway line extends north through the central business district and Chinatown, both intensely developed areas.

⁴² San Francisco Municipal Railway, Third Street Light Rail Project: Economic Revitalization Strategies Report, Working Paper #6, prepared by the Pittman & Hames Associates (January 1998).

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While the Third Street commercial core is effected by the development opportunities and economic spin-offs from nearby neighborhoods, the commercial core continues to have its own distinct economic challenges in the neighborhood and transit supportive land use context.

FACTORS INFLUENCING STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH

At the regional level, the real estate market in the San Francisco Bay Area is strong, with record-setting commercial real estate and residential prices and extremely low vacancy rates. Job growth throughout the region, particularly in Silicon Valley, has fueled an increased demand for new construction and accelerated property values. Like many counties in the California, San Francisco had net job loss in the 1990 – 1995 period, however job growth has been projected for the 1995 – 2000 period.

Table 91.

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO, 1980 PROJECTED 2000

	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>Projected 2000</i>	<i>Annual Change, 1980-2000</i>
<u>San Francisco Co.</u>				
Population	678,974	723,959	785,900	0.73%
Jobs	552,200	566,640	586,950	0.31%

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, Projections '96 and Projections '98

Due to the recent economic boom, the real estate market in San Francisco has rebounded after a period of stagnancy in the early 1990s. Job growth in the retail, multimedia, tourism and financial sectors have spurred much of the recent real estate demand; residential and commercial rents are at record levels in many areas, and vacancy rates are extremely low. Furthermore, about 45 percent of new housing built in San Francisco between 1990 and 1996 was in areas adjacent to the corridor, and in some places rents have increased 75 percent in less than three years.⁴³ Given San Francisco's small size and built-out character, the eastern portion of the city represents the largest area of developable land. About 65 percent of the City's job growth and over 50 percent of the residential growth are projected to be located in the light rail corridor.

⁴³ 1996 Housing Inventory, San Francisco Planning Department, February 1998

SUPPORTIVE LOCAL LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

San Francisco is a dense, urban city with a high percentage of transit work trips (nearly one-third of all work trips). As such, the City has not adopted formal transit oriented land use policies. They are, however, undertaking a comprehensive citywide land use study that could lead to the adoption of formal policies in the future.

San Francisco's zoning code tends to support transit thorough its emphasis on mixed-use and intense development. In Bayview Hunters Point, the existing zoning for the Third Street commercial core (neighborhood commercial, NC3) permits one dwelling unit for each 600 sq. ft. of lot area, or roughly 73 residential units per acre. Therefore, the existing zoning in the commercial core allows for residential densities that are supportive of light rail transit service. Outside of the commercial core, nearby residential zoning is primarily RH1 (one family) and RH2 (two family) which typically permits 17 and 34 residential units per acre, respectively (assuming typical lot size of 25' x 100').

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS USED

The Third Street Light Rail Project will have stations spaced at roughly one-quarter mile apart, a distance that usually defines a TOD, and thus the project could be considered a transit-oriented corridor. Key issues in Bayview Hunters Point include revitalization of the nine block neighborhood commercial district consisting of small scale retail and services (primarily zero lot line), accommodating a surface light rail corridor within a compact 100 foot right-of-way, and balancing transit speed and reliability with parking and traffic needs.

MUNI does not own any significant developable land in the corridor, and there is no formal joint development process.⁴⁴ However, MUNI is working in cooperation with the SFRA to develop strategies for linking future development with the light rail investment, particularly in the Bayview Hunters Point commercial core. Therefore, the City anticipates that public financing of infrastructure, combined with other redevelopment incentives (land assembly, façade improvement programs, low-income housing) will catalyze development in Bayview Hunters Point.

Table 92.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS FOR TOD IN BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT COMMERCIAL CORE

Station Area Market Development Strategies	Combined MUNI and SFRA infrastructure improvements (light rail, roadways, streetscape) and redevelopment incentives (land assembly, façade improve-
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⁴⁴ However, in 1998 MUNI initiated one of its first major joint development projects by issuing an RFP and selecting a project team for the development of a boutique hotel at a MUNI-owned site at Mission Street and The Embarcadero in San Francisco's Financial District. No joint development real estate projects have been identified in the Third Street corridor.

	ment, low-income housing) to jumpstart private sector investment.
Non-Rail Infrastructure Investments	MUNI and SFRA to focus streetscape enhancements in Bayview Hunters Point commercial core; MUNI set aside \$4 to \$5 million to fund streetscape improvements; initial plans include coordinated urban design themes featuring transit shelters, distinctive sidewalk and crosswalk paving materials, street trees, pedestrian lighting, information kiosks, and street banners; MUNI may request MTC Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) planning funds to improve transit and land use linkages at the Oakdale/Palou Station.
Shared Parking/Parking Management	City Planning Code permits a minimum of 1:1 and maximum of 1.5:1 for residential parking; shared parking opportunities identified linking parking resources controlled by churches located on Third Street with nearby businesses; MUNI's replacement parking strategy recommends replacing on-street parking removed by light rail with side street parking oriented at 90 degrees.
Expedited Permits and Reviews	No.
Rezoning	South Bayshore Plan updated in 1995 encourages upper story housing above retail in the retail core; the Bayview Hunters Point community successfully retained the density and character of the residential areas located adjacent to the commercial core, and resisted attempts to increase residential densities; Plan retains underlying NC3 District (moderate-scale neighborhood commercial district) for commercial core permitting up to 73 du/acre; NC3 District encourages diversified commercial core.
Land Assembly	MUNI does not own or control any commercially developable land in the corridor, however SFRA can assemble land through eminent domain; due to political considerations, minimal land assembly through eminent domain will occur except in planning the bus transfer stop near the Oakdale/Palou Station.

Direct Public

Investment in Projects Light rail project costs are \$405 million for surface line (primarily local funds) and \$511 for subway (primarily federal funds); MUNI intends to spend \$45 million for streetscape improvements in the commercial core; SFRA intends to invest an unknown amount in improving businesses facades and land assembly in the Bayview Hunters Point commercial core; no joint development projects have been identified.

Local Transit

Service Design The Third Street Light Rail Project replaces #15 bus line and would provide direct connections to two Caltrain commuter rail stations; MUNI is considering requesting MTC Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) funds to plan for enhanced rail and bus transfers at the Oakdale/Palou Station.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR SEATTLE

The Third Street Light Rail Project symbolizes the challenge many cities face when trying to introduce light rail transit in a small-scale neighborhood commercial district within a constrained right-of-way. Many of the challenges that MUNI and the Bayview Hunters Point

community are still struggling with will likely be confronted in Seattle, especially in the Rainer Valley area. Some of the lessons learned include:

- **Quick Start Implementation Actions.** While sustained economic revitalization requires long-term, phased implementation, MUNI wanted to emphasize quick-start actions that could be implemented within eight to 24 months. Quick-start actions create opportunities to establish a foundation for immediate economic revitalization benefits for the community. Proposed actions included a neighborhood groundbreaking celebration, neighborhood murals to screen construction staging areas, and the rail alignment painted on Third Street.
- **Coordination with Redevelopment Agency.** MUNI is only beginning to consider joint development opportunities on its underutilized sites and controls no commercial developable land in the corridor. Instead, MUNI staff sought to engage and cooperate with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) in order to plan for appropriate land uses and catalyst projects. MUNI's role in the process was to plan for and provide transit and enhancements, with the SFRA taking the lead on land use planning and providing other redevelopment incentives, such as land assembly. Both agencies worked cooperatively by hosting joint economic revitalization forums as part of the light rail planning process.
- **Strong Merchant Participation.** Because the reconfiguration of Third Street would effect Bayview Hunter's Point merchants, MUNI and the SFRA sought the neighborhood business community's participation so that important concerns could be identified, including parking and construction impacts on local businesses.
- **Zoning for Transit-Based Residential Densities.** The South Bayshore Plan retained existing zoning for the Third Street commercial core and surrounding residential areas. The Bayview Hunters Point community successfully retained the density and character of the residential areas that are located adjacent to the commercial core, and resisted attempts to increase residential densities along the corridor. Although residential densities were not increased, the commercial core still allows for densities that are appropriate for high quality transit service.
- **Concentrate Streetscape Improvements.** MUNI preferred to focus its streetscape enhancement dollars in the nine block Bayview Hunters Point commercial core in order to serve as a catalyst for other public and private investments. The transit agency wanted the streetscape improvements to provide a tool for proactively involving children and the community, to be a visible sign of change, and to emphasize the community pride in the public realm.
- **Consider Alternative Measures for Addressing Parking Concerns.** By working with the residents and business owners through the economic revitalization forums and environmental review process, MUNI was able to provide parking recommendations that accommodated both transit and automobiles. These recommendations included increasing side street parking by reorienting the on-street parking from parallel to perpendicular, working with churches to share parking resources, installing additional short-term parking meters to encourage parking turnover, and developing a parking signage plan to guide visitors to available parking supply.

REFERENCES; ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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